

A WEEKEND IN BRENHAM



FABULOUS FINDS

destination
Brenham, Texas

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Aug/Sept 2011

By JULIE CATALANO

Think Brenham, Texas, and the next thought will undoubtedly be...Blue Bell®. As in the famed creamery churning out heavenly ice cream that most of the rest of the country can only dream about. But there's so much more to this little town that sits about halfway between Austin and Houston on Highway 290 that you have to see it to believe it.

For starters, it's the county seat of Washington County, home of the birthplace of Texas and one of the most significant sites in the state's history. Next, the legendary Round Top Antiques Fair (the autumn show is September 28-October 1) are the big daddies of the antique world, bringing dealers and shoppers from all over. Finally, the town itself is like a treasure box of unexpected finds, brimming with specialty shops, restaurants and cafes, gardens, galleries, theatre, a historic downtown square, wine and bluebonnet trails, and storybook bed and breakfasts. Take a weekend to start with our fab five picks but don't stop there. The folks are friendly, the shopping is fine, and you'll come home filled with divine inspiration.

ANT STREET INN www.antstreetinn.com

Houstonians Pam and Tommy Traylor were married only two years when they decided to take a run-down building in 1995 and transform it into a stunning B&B in the heart of downtown Brenham, working harder than they



ever had in their lives. The result was worth it. The Ant Street Inn is every bit as charming as its name, with fifteen luxury guest rooms named after southern cities and decked out in American Victorian antiques and luxe amenities – including some very 21st century perks like free wi-fi, cable, and a full breakfast at the adjoining Brenham Grill. The oh-so-elegant establishment with its stained glass and polished wood floors is anything but stuffy, however, as Pam Traylor works hard to make it all look easy. “We’re always doing small things, like painting and changing out furniture” to keep it fresh, she says, along



with redecorating, writing articles for Facebook and the website, or planning special events like weddings and parties at the inn's 4,000-square foot ballroom. For their considerable repeat business, Ant Street has become almost a home away from home, like the couple who celebrates their anniversary there without fail. “One day while cleaning, I found a small piece of paper sticking out of the wall where they had written the date of each year they visited.” She did what any good hostess would do. “I stuck it back in the wall.”

THE ANTIQUE ROSE EMPORIUM www.antiqeroseemporium.com

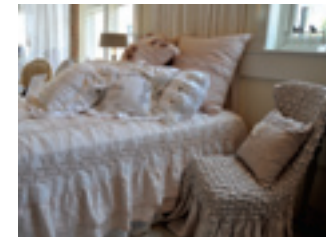
Once upon a time, a horticulturist with a master's degree vowed that he would never grow roses. “Too hard to care for. You have to spray them and coddle them,” recalls Mike Shoup. The thought of fussing over prima donna-type roses left him cold. “I had to find a niche.” Did he ever. After becoming a “rose rustler” – rescuing 100-year-old hardy native roses from cemeteries, roadsides and chain link fences – Shoup and wife Jean have been growing and displaying antique roses since 1985. The Antique Rose Emporium is a spectacular, storybook eight-acre spread in Brenham open year-round that also boasts an herb garden, gazebo, gift shop, a nearby church, and a house and kitchen dating from the 1800s (there's also a location in San Antonio on Evans Road). Beautiful roses drip from railings and climb up trellises. Shoup's mission is to “change the way people think about roses as difficult to grow and unapproachable.”



Not these, he says, calling them “the ultimate garden plant.” Their nursery and mail order business features more than 300 varieties designed to bring their “romantic and dramatic” heritage to the forefront. It's apparently working, as the Emporium received the 2011 prestigious GROW (Great Rosarians of the World) award for its contributions to rose education.

BEADBOARD UPCOUNTRY www.beadboardupcountry.com

Sumptuous, luxurious, artful — just a few of the many superlatives used to describe the world-class offerings at Beadboard UpCountry, particularly their exclusive Arte Pura linens and bedding from Italy that owner Maryanne Flaherty is practically bursting over. “Nobody in the country sells it,” she enthuses. “Thirty-two colors of linens, all washable, and designers have gone crazy over it. We've shipped it as far as Canada.” Exclusive items are nothing new for Flaherty, a former flight attendant who, with former oil and gas accounting executive husband Peter McDowell, has fashioned a jewel of a shop, housed in the restored historic Farmer's Bank, that carries things, says Flaherty, “that you can't get anywhere else.” Californians with Texas roots, the couple took a chance setting up a Euro-country boutique in a small Texas town. “It was the space that did it for us,” says Flaherty. “Where else can you find a place like this, with beautiful tall windows that we can open.” Bright, warm and inviting – much like Flaherty herself – the space is the perfect setting for the fabulousity within. Pillows, placemats, pajamas, candles, crystal, silver, furniture and more treasures are nestled in every corner. Celebrating the shop's fifth anniversary in October, Flaherty adds, “We're really lucky we're still here. There were people who said we would never make it.”

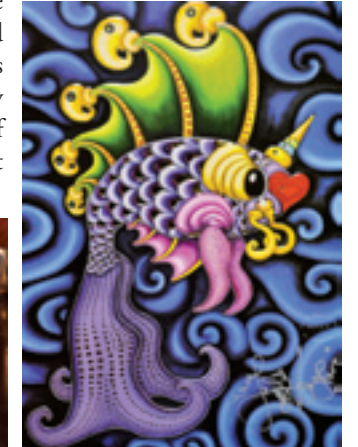


FUNKY ART CAFE www.funkyartcafe.com

Connie Wilder never intended to be a restaurateur and yet here she is – self described “chief cook, bottle washer, CEO, referee, purchaser, babysitter...” Her voice trails off as she stands, surrounded by the signature purple walls of the Funky Art Cafe, a delightful mix of lunchtime eatery, caterer, coffee bar, gallery and gift shop. The colorful surroundings show off about two dozen paintings by local and regional artists, including recent addition Jamie Hayes from New Orleans. “His look is very much our look.” Housed in an historic blacksmith building belonging to her family, Wilder hopes to add artist “meet and greets” and other public special events to her roster, which is already crowded with custom catering for parties, receptions and other gatherings (her back room seats 42 comfortably for dinner). The lunchtime menu – which changes every four months – is also fun and funky, inspired by Wilder's own recipes and her collection of more than 2,000 cookbooks. When



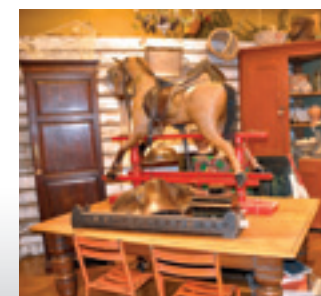
catering, Wilder aims to please, dishing up a monthly gluten-free lunch required by a local office staff, accommodating one bride's request for breakfast foods at her nighttime wedding while providing another with South American fare for her special day. With no set catering menu, “we've done everything from caviar and sushi down to pancakes,” says Wilder. “I've found much to my amazement that food is kind of my art form. I get a real kick out of it.”



LEFTOVERS ANTIQUES www.leftoversantiques.net



Manager Sandi Severance is minding the store while owners and antique hunters extraordinaire Ed Fulkerson and Michael Breddin are out. And what a store it is. Leftovers Antiques is a giant, sprawling, eye-popping barn of a place, filled with treasures, trinkets and some truly impressive pieces, some of which Fulkerson and Breddin have found on their twice yearly European buying trips. Always on the lookout for what customers want, the duo travels extensively to keep their unique stock replenished. “We have 10,000 square feet here,” says Severance, “and things are constantly moving out.” Some of their most in-demand pieces are oversized furniture – armoires, cupboards and huge farm-style tables, to name a few, to fill Texas-sized homes and ranches. The store is divided into areas showcasing different themes like bedding and gifts, although the displays are always rotating to keep things interesting. Whimsical touches abound, like a kayak from the 1800s and an antique bathtub suspended from the ceiling. Located about five miles outside of Brenham on Highway 290, Severance adds that “being right on the highway means we get a lot of traffic, especially during Round Top's Antiques Week.” The store usually tries to



tie in events like book signings at that time (one year Shabby Chic queen Rachel Ashwell made an appearance). There's another popular tradition, and one they're already getting calls for – holiday merchandise. “Christmas is big here,” she says. “Really big.” ♦